



NEWS RELEASE

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PRESIDENT'S FY 04 BUDGET PROPOSAL FOR SBA OFFERS \$21 BILLION IN SMALL BUSINESS FINANCING, FUNDING FOR INITIATIVES TO MAKE AGENCY MORE CUSTOMER-FRIENDLY

WASHINGTON – President Bush's proposed FY 2004 budget for the U.S. Small Business Administration provides nearly \$21 billion in support for small business financing, as well as increased funding for priority initiatives that will make the agency more customer-centric.

"The President's budget tackles our nation's top priorities – strengthening homeland security, winning the war on terrorism and expanding economic opportunity," said SBA Administrator Hector V. Barreto. "The SBA's budget is designed to address one of those priorities specifically: expanding economic opportunity. It recognizes the vital role that America's 25 million small businesses play in our nation's economy, and demonstrates the President's commitment to small business owners and to an efficient and effective SBA."

The budget proposes a total FY 2004 appropriation of \$797.9 million, maintaining the spending level proposed for FY 2003, and roughly 4 percent larger than the budget for FY 2002.

The budget includes commitments for more than \$20.8 billion in small business loans, loan guarantees and venture capital, and more than \$760 million in new disaster loan funds for victims of natural disasters. Included in that amount is funding for \$9.3 billion in guaranteed loans under the 7(a) program. The budget proposal includes more than \$115 million for the agency's technical assistance programs, including Small Business Development Centers and the Service Corps of Retired Executives.

The budget also proposes funding for key agency operational and organizational priorities. Chief among them is investment in its transformation initiative designed to make the SBA more customer-centric.

These initiatives include e-government, training and operational transformation plans designed to streamline the agency's delivery of services, free up more employees to directly work with small businesses, and allow more small businesses to access the services they need to succeed.

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*For more information about the SBA's small business programs, call the SBA Answer Desk at 1-800 U ASK SBA or TDD 704-344-6640. Also, visit the SBA's extensive Web site at www.sba.gov. SBA, in partnership with Staples, has introduced a new online Newsletter **SBA Solutions**.*

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